

NewsRelease



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MARCH 16 EVENT

Students help NASA study sun's radiation

A NASA satellite instrument to be launched later this year has already captured the imagination of a group of Newport News high school students, who will visit NASA Langley on March 16.

For the last six months, Menchville High School physics classes monitored natural haze and air pollution by measuring the strength of the sun's rays with photometers that they built. The students are part of a pilot educational outreach program developed by the Langley Research Center in Hampton, Va. It is sponsored by the Stratospheric Aerosol and Gas Experiment III (SAGE III) mission, which will be launched into Earth orbit on a Russian spacecraft this fall.

The students used common everyday materials to make the photometers. They drilled holes in a VHS videotape box, installed a light emitting diode (LED), and attached a voltmeter. The device uses the LED to measure sunlight intensity.

The homemade photometers are simplified versions of SAGE III, which will provide accurate long-term measurements of aerosols, ozone, water vapor, and other important trace gases in the atmosphere. These measurements will help scientists improve our understanding of climate, climate change, and human-induced ozone trends.

About 30 students will tour Langley's atmospheric science laboratories Tuesday, March 16. They will be available for photographs and interviews at 10 a.m. Please arrive at the NASA Langley front gate by 9:45 a.m.

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